

REMARKS

A final Office Action was mailed on December 17, 2009. In response, Applicants timely file this Preliminary Amendment together with a Request for Continued Examination.

Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Status of the Claims

Claims 1 – 5 are presently pending. Applicants amend claims 1 and 5. No new matter is introduced. Support for the amendments may be found, for example, with reference to Applicants' specification at page 4, line 17 through page 5, line 18; page 23, lines 9 – 26; and page 25, line 25 through page 26, line 1 of the specification.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102, 103

Claims 1 – 3 and 5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,825,876 to Peterson, Jr. ("Peterson"). Claim 4 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being unpatentable over Peterson in view of U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/0020745 to Yap et al. ("Yap"). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejections of claims 1 – 5 under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102, 103.

In amended independent claim 1, Applicants claim:

1. A card game system, comprising:

a plurality of game apparatuses, each of which functions as either a master apparatus configured to control a game or a terminal apparatus configured to perform a process in accordance with indications from the master apparatus, and each of the plurality of game apparatuses reads game information recorded in a card, the game progresses based on the read game information,

the game apparatus set as the master apparatus has

a permission device configured to reject to receive the game information at the master reception device until the start determination device determines to start the specific time, and configured to transmit timing information to the plurality of game apparatuses including the game apparatus set as the master apparatus to permit the reception when the start determination device determines to start a specific time,

an elapse time determination device configured to determine whether a time set as the specific time in advance elapses after the permission device permits the reception of the game information,

a rejection device configured to reject the reception again when the elapse time determination device determines that the set time elapses, and

a device configured to execute game progress processes based on the game information received during the specific time from the game apparatuses including the game apparatus set as the master apparatus, and each of the plurality of game apparatuses has

a device configured to, when receiving the timing information, make a player use a card to obtain the game information from the card, and

a terminal transmission device configured to transmit the game information having been read to the master reception device.

(Emphasis added).

In the card game system according to claim 1, each apparatus in a plurality of apparatuses functions either a master apparatus configured to control a game, or a terminal apparatus configured to perform a process in accordance with indications from the master apparatus. Each of the game apparatuses is configured to recognize to start a specific time upon receiving timing information from the permission device of the master apparatus, and can then start to make a player to use a card and transmit game information recorded in the card during the specific time. A server interconnecting the game apparatuses is configured to accept game information and execute game progress processes based on the game information received only during the specific time.

Peterson discloses a system for providing time-limited availability of content (movies, music games and the like) via a storage medium (see, e.g., abstract of Peterson). In the system of Peterson, a consumer (corresponding to Applicants' claimed game apparatus) can obtain access to secured data comprising content from a server 60 (corresponding to Applicants' claimed master apparatus) only after obtaining permission from the server 60 (see, e.g., Col. 4: 30 – 67 of Peterson). During a so-called "premier event," for example, consumer access to associated content may be forbidden. In this case, it is suggested that the premier event or another period of time during which access is permitted correspond to Applicants' claimed specific time, and that the secured data corresponds to Applicants' claimed game information.

Applicants note that the premier event or other period of time disclosed by Peterson merely represent a term for forbidding or permitting consumer access to secured data stored at the server. In contrast to Applicants' claimed system, Peterson fails to teach or otherwise suggest a method for synchronizing distributed actions of consumers as in the case of Applicants' claimed game apparatuses. In other words, while Peterson's system controls the actions of the server, it does not control actions of the other distributed game apparatuses, and thereby, does not synchronize the associated actions of a plurality consumers who act individually to submit game information. In sharp contrast to Applicants' claimed system, Peterson's system provides no means for synchronizing the arrival of user requests for content, but merely limits the delivery of content to asynchronously-made consumer requests during proscribed time periods

Accordingly, for at least the above-argued reasons, Applicants submit that amended independent claim 1 is not anticipated by Peterson and stands in condition for allowance. As claims 2 – 4 each depend from allowable independent claim, Applicants submit that dependent claim claims 2 – 4 are also allowable for at least this reason. As independent claim 5 includes essentially the same elements above-argued as distinguishing allowable independent claim 1 over the cited reference, Applicants submit that amended independent claim 5 is also allowable for at least the same reason.

Therefore, Applicants respectfully request that the rejections of claims 1 – 5 under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102, 103 be withdrawn.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number indicated below if the Examiner believes any issue can be resolved through either a Supplemental Response or an Examiner's Amendment.

Dated: March 17, 2010

Respectfully submitted,

By



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